Dear Hal, 5/6/74

When I saw the Apls reatun address I wondered if the letter was from you so I opened and read it while walking through chores in town this a.m. I have not done anything about the other mail, haven't even looked at the headlines yet.

I have been looking forward to hearing from you and am glad that you have written. I must begin with some explanations so you will not deem me impolite or of other than good intentions. I am, as I have been for an unrelieved decade, extraordinarily busy. I don't know what a day off is and until recently rarely got more than four hours' sleep. Several weeks agi I was hit by the first of two essentially minor problems. They have slowed me down. The first is about past, a pulled chest musclae that made even breathing painful. The second is a recurrence of an oldie, something undiagnosed in the middle ears that, as the doctor put it, occasionally lets the nuts and bolts work loose. They are graducally tightening again. So, the combination puts even more time pressure on me. Thus I will not, for one example, at least at this point, go into my full (and unromantic) OSS history. Nor will I be able to do what I shpuld, read this and correct my terrible typing. I am writing a book that I must rush through, can't go into it now, and this applies even more pressure.

I'll follow my usual practise of addressing what I remember and then skim your letter again to see if I have overlooked anything.

As rational people, even those of strong political prejudices, address such matters, I have a perfectly clear record. I have never been a member of anything except trades unions and cooperatives. My first "political" problem was when I was writing a book on the Dies committee and they undertook to frame me. In the end, while they made the strongest efforts ever made to get me, the grand jury refused to indict, a first, and I got their man convicted, still another and I think still unequallyed first.

I had no such problems in OSS. I was a soldier. My first jobs was the only investigative job I ever did. It was a super-secret super-spectacular that is relevent to my recent work. A crew of men, led by one named Faris, had volunteered for an almost certain death overseas drop, had been framed after a fight with the Washington MPs, were in jail, General Donovan, all of whose lawyers had been ineffectual, believed them innocent, and after I was security cleared and moved it that job awaited me. I walked the men in six weeks. And the guy in charge of the framing suicided.

Where I ran into this same kind of fascist trouble was when OSS was broken into two. I was an analyst except when I was sued as a writer. My last writing job, to write the secret history of OSS's intelligence operations, was stolen and appeared with Jimmy Cagney starring. It is the movie OSS. It was at this point that I got a medical discharge and was rehired as a civilian analyst. I was in the past transferred to State. There was what amounts to a pogrom. I was the only non-scholar of the ten (aside from a case of mistaken identity, it was that careless) and I fought all the others, especially the PhDs, who were the majority, to fight back. I then got us counsel. In the end we won. We were rehired and were expected to and did quit. I at least got gypped out of all that back pay. Of the nine intended, eight were Jews and the ninth was married to one. I am familiar with nost of the work done by most of us and it was quite the opposite of the implications. It was what latter got called McCarthyism. Enough on this?

Bud did ask me to join his committee while he was still organizing it. I refsused for clearly specified reasons that boil down to my distrust of so many of those he trusted, the concept itself was wrong and couldn't work, and he was assured that all those doing real work would have nothing to do with hin or it. It was the wrong way to do the right thing and with people who ranged from simply incompetent to highly suspect. One of the grudges Bud continues to bear is that I was so right.

You ask about Bob. I know little of his views, having stayed away from the CTIA once violations of trust with serious consequences were repeated. Then Bud started not keeping his word. My opinion of Bob coincides with yours insofar as you consider personality but I go farthur and say that for this kind of work he has the wrong kind of mind. With all that work he has produced nothing except trouble.

Despite this record I like Bud personally, disagree with him often, work with him when it serves common interests and fight like hell when I think he is wrong. Recently there has been little need but the past holds some pretty bitter and verbally violent incidents. That in each case I was proven right may increase his unexpressed respect for me but I don't think it has father fondness.

I don't think it makes a bit of difference what the current college generation thinks of the CTIA. I do hope it is worse than you say because the sooner it is ended the better the chances of accomplishment. It has been and has also been the focus of the most telling criticisms of the work in opposition to the official fiction, it is incapable of ever being anything better. it has done no good at all and much harm, and the crazy ones are getting crazier and crazier. I regard it as I first described it years ago, as an abortion.

Perhaps at some point someone will find a way of bringing so many conflicting views into harmony, so many contradictory personalities to a working relatuonship, but I believe it can t be done. Others of us have worked together, something with acrimony, but always with mutual respect and trust and without all the bullshit that has appeared without doing good and doing harm, we have learned and shared much. The number decreased sharply with the advent of CTIA simply because of attrition and because the CTIA was an attack on the credibility of all other work. I should not sy other because it never really did any.

I still work closesly with Lesar. I like and respect him much. It is chiefly but not entirely on legal work. I am sure he has to be as disenchanted with CTIA as I am. I understand that Smith has left and Bud is fighting the others on what should happen. You now know my view. You forget, but I told you all of this long ago, when you told me you were joining. Earlier you had visited me and had said you would get a band of law students together to work with me. I am sorry this did not happen and that you got off, with the best of intentions, in the wrong direction.

I think this may illustrate the problem the mere existence of CTIA created. There were many capable people, of whom you are one, who were not able to work full time but could work part time. If in each part of the country where really significant work was being done these with part-time capabilities could have joined with others who had already acquired much knowledge, real accomplishment could have resulted. There are countless wothrwhile things I have wanted to do and have not been able to do myself. Asingle good law student in DC could have helped advance what I have done very much. Could even today.

Those t ings you told me before you left are more than fascinating and relevant. But the separation between us now is a considerable inhibition. So also is my inability to sit down and write long explanations that are necessary for these kinds of things to be done. I have to give the other work, including writing, priority.

CTIA is CIA/cops. Bullshit, for all my dislike of some, contempt of others, disapproval of the whole abortion, etc. I am satisfied Bud is not. I am satisfied that some are dubious characters and that Bud likes and trusts them. However, suppose they were? Except for what they did because it comes naturally to all of them, this destruction of credibility, what the hell role could they serve? None at all. They accomplished nothing, developed nothing, so why should the spooks waste any real effort on them? Now the destructi of credibility is another matter. It first the Disinformation type. But it is the natural way of all those characters, so official interests or direction was unnecessary. It is, in my opinion, the natural result of the characters of the people involved.

I have never met Hunt, never heard of him until Watergate. On him we are at once close together and yet far apart. You out him in Dallas. Except as a self-starter I do not and cannot. After what he did before the Bay of Pigs no faction of the Agency could have trusted him with anything like that. I lack the actual proof, but it is my belief tha t as you say, he worked with Dulles until Dulles left and what I can't prove but do believe, therefater was at least for the most part in the verboten Domestic end. I have a kind of proof beginning in 1965 only and have been able to do some tracing since, without having ever met anyone who claims to have known him. I believe part of his disinformation work had to do with the JFK assassination, and here we are close. I don't remember my source, but I have been told his original Mexico assignment was disinformation. So we immediately have a question that addresses our conflicting (in part) views of him: why the hell should CIA have found it necessary to Dininform about JFK's assassination?

You describe him as "a CIA 'assassination expert.'" Is this opinion or fact? In either case I would like to know the proof or the reason. All clandestine operators, in varying degree, know and have to know something about assassinations. But this does not make all of them experts.

I would suggest that you simplify your belief of the Dallas Disinformation operation. I see no need for there to have been any CIA involvement. The forces at work and the actual developments eliminated the need. They don't generally do the unnecessary, if there are spectacular exceptions. Between the local authorities and Hoover's personal needs, character and predispositions, what more was needed? It had to work out the way it did, and I know of nothing that required the CIA to help it along.

This goes for your view of Nixon's concern over the Hunt blackmail. I think it can be simplified and is credible without any reference to Dallas. If Hunt yapped, Nixon was hurt badly. Did Nixon need more? If Hunt blackmailedhe got money, which happens to be the most important thing in life to him. Did he need more than what he could say about those jobs he had done for the White House (and if you have any knowledge here I would appreciate it)? No, please don't complicate this enormously complicated matter more than it need be.

If you do you will be and will remain hopelessly bogged down. The safest approach is to begin with the simplest and then if it is insufficient to add to it.

Remember, each unnecessary person was a new weak link. The spooks know this best.

Frankly, I also can't and don't believe that the top command of the CIA offed JFK or ordered it. Now a faction, that is a different story. What you must understand is that JFK's and the top of the CIA's view on the essential matters, like SEAsia, had changed in the same direction and at the same time, roughly. So, he was not an enemy but an asset to it.

What little of the CIA's papers came out with The Pentagon Papers is quite consistent with this. They were really in conflict with LBJ's views, which differed from JFK's. It was not until after Laos and after they came to realize that what they had undertaken was impossible that the top command view changed. JFK's had by then, too, and if not out of high principle, from practicality. It could not be done.

The real conflict on policy was between JFK and the prevailing mi,itary mind.

I have to get to the many other things.

I would welcome your beliefs on Hunt, especially in domestic matter and the Watergate, separate by what you know to be fact and what you believe. And anything else you known on CIA domestic operations. And fronts.

You were to have spoken to your ex-wife before you left to see if she would talk to me about what she knew of the Hunts in Europe. I do not know what your relations are now, but this continues to interest me much. If she lacks a car, I am sure Lesar will bring her here and if she has the kids, they'll go crazy about this place, with even fish than come to be fed. If she has a car and lives near the western half of the Beltway, it is an easy hour and an easy drive. With rhe reduced speed limit, it is less than an hour from some areas because there is no stopping, no light, and seven minutes on side roads after the expressways.

I will be writing what I have put together and because of this can't take time to write it all over again in letters. Whether or not I can get it printed, it will not then be secret from you. I see an importance in Hunt not ever indicated anywhere, and that I am pursuing, which is in part an explanation of my request for anything you can supply. Or anyone to whom you can refer me.

But please believe me, Hal, if there was no more than his own account, one most favorable to him, of what he did just before the Bay of Pigs, that in itself is more than enough to have ended and tap CIA trust in him for really delicate missions.

While I hope things begin to go well with you and that you take root and prosper and stay profitably busy, I also hope you will find time to put all you can on paper for me. Here I remind you that I am 61 and extraordinarily weary and no longer posessed of the photographic memory I wonce enjoyed. So, if there is anything you want held in confidence, please so lable it. I would also welcome and like to be able to use in anotherwork temporarily laid aside what you once told me and I no longer recall clearly about some cables on Cuba you once saw.

I think the easiest way to work your way through all the inevitable errors is with a pencil, making corrections as you go.

Thanks and best regards,